**EDITORIAL COMMENT**

**Voting change a lazy step backwards**

MATH IS HARD, THAT'S THE SENTIMENT that pervaded at last week's Students' Council meeting. The defences of students' best interests spent 10 minutes discussing and then passing a motion in the first reading recommended by the Elections Review Committee that reversed the Student Vote Review (SVR) system that was put in place last year. This means that the committee's decision to recommend IRV in the second round of voting for the council elections will be reversed.

The argument against the change was that this version ofSVT is broken. But under the IRV method, the science council's race last year had NOTA coming last in the final rankings, despite scoring the second highest of all four positions. Though NOTA is not broken, the motion to maintain it passed with only three dissenting votes, none of whom bothered to speak against it. This can only be described as being motivated by a selfish desire to fill seats with students who wish to see the effects of students - or at least intellectual laziness.

There were other options presented to council by the ERC in September, two versions of the Re-Open Nomination methods. These would work under STV and replace none of the Above with Re-Open Nomination on the ballot, while avoiding the issues with one representing a standard NOTA. The problem with one of them is that it only allows for one vacant seat, but the other, ReNo, leads to a relatively fair distribution of vacant seats by transferring the votes from one winning candidate to a second vacant seat as if it had been on the ballot - as it would with an actual winning candidate - and so on as needed. But this had been in place on last year's General Faculty Council election, and the 22 per cent of the vote earned by NOTA would have likely led to two vacant seats, or more, relatively accurately reflecting voters' wishes.

The ERC presented the IR-ON as option too, but it seems no more complicated than the basic STV system already in place. It's almost the same thing. No arcane secrecy beyond the comprehension of students at a first look here: only simple, accessible math. The concern that this system is too complex to explain is incorrect - and insurmountable. It doesn't matter if the average voter or candidate doesn't understand the intricacies of the voting method. What matters is that after all, we can all look at the distribution of votes, compare them to the seats, and agree that the results are basically proportional. What matters is that regardless of who bothers to look into how the votes are counted, the votes are counted in a way that leads to a fair allocation of seats - at a fair number of vacant seats - depending upon what those votes were.

The real shame is that council would rather spend its time pointlessly delaying and finally, unfairly sending back its committee what should have been a clear-cut decision to allow campaigning on election day - because this motion doesn't require any research to complain about. That councillors had no more last-minute problems here, and nothing besides "IRV is complicated" regarding reverting to IRV betrays their laziness. Nobody bothered to give their feedback to the committee in the weeks following the presentation, and nobody bothered to give IRV a chance.

It's easy to go with a committee's recommendation when you don't want to do minimal work to understand an issue, as with the voting system. And it's easy to instead tediously debate something that has been in school since the 1980s when no work is required to speak on it.

The result is that council has at best delayed a decision that would strongly increase voter turnout while making it clear they don't have the time to properly represent the students they claim to. Reverting to IRV is the choice of a council more concerned with filling seats with unrepresentative candidates than reflecting students' wishes. We should expect better.

Ryan Bromsgrove 
OPINION EDITOR

**APIRG is complicit in spreading hate**

(Brie "Council Watch - Students' Union fees used to spread hate pre- sentation" by Ryan Bromsgrove, Oct. 26)

Ryan Bromsgrove provides a very inaccurate view of my presenta tion to Students' Council and claims it should not have been allowed. However, I had previously provided Students' Council with a letter explaining the presentation. Council overwhelmingly supported hearing the presentation, and was willing to engage with the valid and important concerns of the presentation. Many councillors stated that they found it interesting and others also personally thanked me afterwards.

Bromsgrove was not satisfied with my justification of the hateful nature of the events. I explained that calling Israel, the only free democracy in the Middle East, "apartheid" is wrong, makes a false analogy with South Africa, and ignores the real apartheid nations in the Middle East and the world.

I quoted Harvard University President Larry Summers who calls to boycott Israel "anti-Semitic" in their effect if not in their intent of unfairly singling out Israel.

I referenced the recent findings of the Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism describing the level of anti-Semitism and intimidation on Canadian university campuses, often created by events such as Israeli Apartheid Week.

Nevertheless, I explicitly said more than once that I do not want to ban Palestine Solidarity Network on Israeli Apartheid Week.

I pointed out that PNSEG invites speakers that are radically anti-Israel and have said that Zionism is racist. PNSEG helped with an event last year with Norman Finkelstein, who frequently says his politics against Israel is worse than the Nazis. There is something fundamentally and morally wrong when money from students is being used by groups whose events demonize Israel and compare it to Nazi Germany and apartheid South Africa.

When APIRG turns a blind eye to these hate-fulls and makes poor funding decisions, it is complicit in propagating hate that harms the student body. Anyone who is not concerned by these inflammatory events that are promoting bigotry, racism, misinforma tion, and bias should check his/her own complacency.

Students are not fully aware of the groups and controversial events that they fund through APIRG. When their moneys' being used for activities with such hateful messages, there needs to be better communication to all students if they want to opt out. For instance, Bromsgrove could have made a useful contribution by asking many first-year students how informed they are of where their money goes regarding APIRG, but instead he gravely mischaracterizes my position and failed to bring constructive reporting to the table.

Joseph Mandelbaum 
MEDICINE

**Letters to the editor**

From the web

High native suicide rate factored into study

(Re: "Higher healthcare usage reported among suicide cases" by Andrew Jeffrey, Oct. 20)

Individuals were classified into four individual-level socioeconomic proxy groups based on health care premium sub-category: the (mutually exclusive) classifications were First Nations, Social Assistance, Premium Subsidy, No Premium Subsidy. Those on social assistance used considerably more health services than the other groups. First Nations also used more services than those classified as premium subsidy or no premium subsidy. In the logistic regression analysis, First Nations were significantly more likely (O.R. = 1.2) to die by suicide than the reference group (no premium subsidy).

"Ken M" & "Ken K"